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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 27: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (continued) (A/56/140)

Agenda item 108: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (continued) (A/56/3, A/56/57-E/2001/5, A/56/73-E/2001/68 and Add.1, A/56/114-E/2001/93 and Add.1, A/56/169, A/56/180, A/56/288, E/2001/104, A/C.3/56/L.2 and L.3)

Agenda item 109: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (continued) (A/56/152)

1. **Ms. Elafi** (Netherlands), speaking as the youth representative in her delegation, said that both the United Nations and young people could benefit from a close working relationship through meaningful youth participation. Youth from all over the world had gathered recently in Dakar, Senegal, for the fourth session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system, which had adopted the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy. That document identified new opportunities for youth empowerment and recommendations for fighting the threats they faced, including unemployment, environmental degradation, diseases like HIV/AIDS, poverty, armed conflict, illiteracy, intolerance and discrimination. The future of the World Youth Forum had also been discussed. Her Government was eager to enhance the value of such gatherings, which provided an opportunity for youth from all over the world to interact and learn from other nations. They also provided a framework for a collective international voice of youth. One of the most important purposes of the Forum was to look beyond regional problems to global issues, in an attempt to narrow the gaps between regions. In order to increase the effectiveness of the World Youth Forum, in the future it should be based on a transparent structure and a broad representative process.

2. In order for the Dakar recommendations to be implemented, young people needed assistance from Governments and United Nations agencies. Governments should make a commitment to include youth in their official delegations to the General

Assembly and other international meetings. The United Nations system must be accessible to young people, especially those from developing countries. States should be encouraged to provide sufficient funding for youth activities by contributing to the United Nations Youth Fund.

3. Lastly, referring to the impact of the 11 September attacks, she recalled that 2001 had been proclaimed the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. She commended those Governments which had made it their aim to encourage intercultural dialogue and openly embrace cultural diversity and pluralism. That would help fight intolerance of the kind experienced the world over in recent weeks in the form of a backlash against, for example, Arabs and Muslims. It was terrifying that some people were unable to identify the recent attacks on the United States for what they were: acts of terror by extremists who did not represent true Islam or the Arab people. It had been heartening to her personally, as a Dutch Moroccan, to see many leading politicians in her own country and elsewhere take a clear stand against such a backlash.

4. Tolerance and understanding could be stimulated through intercultural learning and the international involvement of young people in particular. They could help eradicate misconceptions and create a society in which diversity was valued. The international community must commit itself to ensuring that the battle against terrorism did not widen the gap among people of different countries, nationalities and religions, as well as between majorities and minorities within individual countries.

5. **Mr. Maquieira** (Chile) said that, according to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, between 7.5 and 10 per cent of the population of developing countries suffered from some degree of disability. For Chile, that amounted to nearly 1.4 million people; equal rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities were therefore priorities for his Government. Over the past decade, Chile had changed its approach to dealing with disabled persons, shifting from a State which provided assistance in the form of health benefits and social security but left the task of integration to the private sector to a State which made resources directly available for promoting the social, workplace and educational integration of such persons. Thus conceived, social inclusion benefited the entire community.

6. Steps had also been taken to promote a change in cultural attitudes towards persons with disabilities, both in the media and among educators, opinion-makers, political leaders and others. In the legislative area, a 1994 act had established norms for the full social integration of disabled persons and their access to education, transportation and telecommunications. Civil society had played a very important role in all such initiatives, in an effort to build a more equitable and humane society.

7. The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance had adopted a Declaration and Plan of Action in which the General Assembly was invited to consider the drafting of an international convention to protect the rights and dignity of disabled persons and eliminate discrimination against them. His delegation believed that the Commission for Social Development should begin to consider the possibility of drafting such a convention in order to report thereon to the next session of the General Assembly.

8. **Mr. Barg** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that Libya's experience in the field of human development in generally, and social development in particular, was unique inasmuch as decisions on development were taken collectively with the participation of all segments of society. Political decision-making in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was based on direct popular rule as exercised through the People's Congresses, which were the decision-making bodies, and the People's Committees, which were the executive bodies. In that framework, the project for the advancement of all segments of society was based on the achievement of self-reliance and economic and social justice and the rejection of exclusion and marginalization, so as to ensure the well-being of the individual and the community. Social justice also involved ensuring the optimal distribution of income and wealth and balancing the needs of present and future generations.

9. His country believed that human beings were both the pivot and the purpose of social development. Investment in people brought about social development designed to improve human life and well-being through the optimal use of resources for the benefit of all segments of society without discrimination. Over the past three decades, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya had achieved great success in preparing a suitable environment for the various areas of social development and had given it absolute priority in

successive budgets and development plans, particularly with regard to education, health and vocational training infrastructures.

10. Life expectancy at birth had increased considerably in his country as a result of the progress made in the development of health and nutrition infrastructures. Great advances had also been made in education: 67 per cent of women and 87 per cent of men were now literate. The overall literacy rate was 77.5 per cent, as against 39 per cent in 1973. Libyan women had made great advances: 75 per cent of Libyan girls were enrolled in preparatory and secondary schools, as compared with 79 per cent of boys. The education sector had been given high priority in successive development plans and programmes since 1969 and had accounted for 17 per cent of the general budget during the 1990s.

11. In the housing sector, homeownership had been promoted and an end had been put to the rental system that had prevailed before the revolution. The phenomenon of marginal housing and slum agglomerations in rural and urban areas, which had accounted for 45 per cent of housing in Libya before the revolution, had also been eliminated.

12. One of the most important transformations had been the reduction of the income gap among social groups and between urban and rural areas. Despite the negative impact of international economic circumstances, the fall in oil prices in the 1970s and 1980s and the various embargoes imposed on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, implementation of the State's economic and social policies based on eliminating the disparities among regions and families had nevertheless remained a priority. Average per capita income had increased to 8.2 times the average in the 1970s at the beginning of the revolutionary era.

13. Since the 1969 revolution, the State had created an effective social system aimed at protecting citizens and ensuring their security in the event of sickness, old age or disaster and at providing social welfare to children and to disabled and older persons with no one to support them. Such persons enjoyed material benefits that enhanced their role in society and afforded them equal opportunities to obtain a livelihood. Under that social umbrella, the State also provided basic pensions for widows and divorced and needy women, particularly older women.

14. His delegation stressed the need to maintain the momentum generated by the celebration of the International Year of Older Persons, which constituted a step towards raising awareness of the needs and contributions of that age group, to which Arab and Islamic religious and moral values accorded great status and esteem because of its important role in ensuring continuity between generations. His country's concern went beyond providing the necessary care for that group to ensuring their involvement in social, economic and political development projects. Such involvement should preserve them from one of two extremes, namely, acute dependency or distressful social exclusion. The family, in its traditional form, was a fundamental and supportive factor in that regard. In that connection, he expressed appreciation to the Government of Spain for offering to host the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002.

15. His country accorded similar attention to developing the skills of young people by enabling them to exercise their right to education, work and welfare, thereby promoting their social, political, economic and environmental participation in their communities.

16. The Copenhagen Declaration and the outcome document of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had called for the creation of an appropriate economic, political and social climate that would enable peoples to achieve social development. Although many developing States had assumed responsibility for the achievement of social development at the national level and had made great efforts to fulfil their commitments in that regard, those countries had not been afforded appropriate conditions for meeting the challenges of achieving the goals set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. The agreed target for Official Development Assistance had not been met and the burdens of debt and debt-servicing were impeding the economic and social development efforts of developing countries.

17. While full and effective implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action was basically a national responsibility, it could not be achieved without the full commitment of the international community. At the current session, the international community must reaffirm its commitment to promote efforts to combat factors that posed grave threats to international peace and security and must renew its undertaking to eradicate malnutrition, hunger, disease, drug abuse, foreign occupation and

international terrorism, including State terrorism. It must take effective action to eradicate diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS and practical steps to cancel the external debt. There should be a universal resolve to reform the international financial institutions to make them more democratic and their decision-making more transparent. It was also necessary to eliminate the negative economic and social consequences of globalization, particularly the marginalization of the role of developing countries in the global economy.

18. The *2001 Report on the World Social Situation* showed that the economic and social situation in Africa remained grave and that despite the efforts made by the African States to fulfil their national and international commitments, the international community must make a serious commitment to promoting African peace-making mechanisms and to helping the continent solve its economic and health problems by revising the unfair conditions imposed by international and private financial institutions, offering fair prices for their exports of raw materials, eliminating the barriers faced by their exports on global markets and formulating decisive, comprehensive measures to deal with the debt problem.

19. He hoped that the United Nations would continue to discharge its responsibilities, particularly its responsibility to protect the right of future generations to a better world. In that connection, his delegation associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the Committee's 3rd meeting.

20. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the Holy See would continue to defend the family as the basic unit of society. Currently, in the face of conflict, poverty, demographic change and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it was necessary to realize the important function of the family in holding society together.

21. Although the sad events of 11 September 2001 had caused the General Assembly to postpone its special session on children, the promotion and protection of the rights of children continued to demand attention. Indeed, the Charter of the United Nations affirmed the determination to create a better world for future generations.

22. The Holy See also looked forward to participating in the discussions on the forthcoming Second World Assembly on Ageing. It was regrettable that, just as the

world began to make great advances in prolonging life, reverence and respect for life had been lost. It seemed impossible to believe that the taking of life had become an acceptable alternative in some places. For many older persons, changes in legislation or medical practice had become a new source of anxiety and could weaken the relationship of unconditional trust which they had a right to place in those whose mission it was to care for them. Persons with disabilities were also unique individuals with equal and inviolable dignity. Governments and civil society must work to provide them with living conditions and opportunities such that their dignity was recognized and protected.

23. The valuable documents before the Committee were a reminder of the responsibility of each Government and society to provide for the needs of all people, especially the most vulnerable. As the United Nations began to turn its attention to the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, it should remember the first principle of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the need to recognize the human person as the centre of all its concerns.

24. **Mr. Al Naqbi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He noted with regret that despite all the collective commitments made by heads of State and Government at the various international conferences held over the past decade and in the Millennium Declaration particularly with regard to social development and poverty eradication, national, regional and international challenges to the fulfilment of those commitments, such as armed and civil racial conflicts, genocide, enforced displacement, the proliferation of drugs, organized crime and terrorism against innocent persons were increasing in an unprecedented manner. His delegation deplored the current state of humankind and the fear, tension and instability generated by the recent grievous terrorist operations against the United States and other countries, which had caused death, injury or loss of income for thousands of innocent people.

25. A worldwide campaign of solidarity was needed to meet all those growing challenges with a view to strengthening international cooperation and transparency based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and of international law, namely, equality among States, non-intervention in the internal

affairs of States, the right of peoples to self-defence, to self-determination and to oppose foreign occupation, and respect for cultural diversity and diversity of beliefs. His delegation called for the strengthening of regional and international mechanisms designed to contain conflicts and their destructive consequences, curb the factors that led to their outbreak and prosecute those responsible for acts involving human rights violations, terrorism, trafficking of drugs and prohibited weapons, organized crime and money-laundering, among others. That would help mobilize human, financial, development and environmental efforts and resources for the social development and well-being of peoples, instead of squandering them needlessly.

26. He reaffirmed his country's full support for the recommendations contained in the outcome documents of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, which had enhanced the international community's awareness of the nature of the social and developmental problems facing the world's peoples, particularly in developing and least developed countries. It was very important that States, particularly the developed countries and donors, should fulfil their commitments to implement those recommendations. Official and unofficial assistance to developing countries must be increased, their debt burden must be alleviated and the conditions governing their access to technology for peaceful uses and the access of their products to global markets must be eased to enable those countries to carry out appropriate reforms of their social and development institutions, diversify their sources of national income, create job opportunities for their nationals, provide education, health and social welfare services and combat chronic and epidemic diseases, especially HIV/AIDS. That would help reduce the gap between developed and developing countries and bridge the social, economic and technological divide.

27. On instructions from His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, to make the individual in that State the pivot and the purpose of national development endeavours, the State had adopted legislation, policies and plans aimed at developing national human resources through the development and modernization of educational, health and cultural institutions and the establishment of centres to train young people and develop their

scientific and technological skills in accordance with national development needs. It had been active in the establishment of homes and centres for the welfare of families, children and older and disabled persons, in the provision of health and social insurance services for nationals and in the creation of diversified employment opportunities for them, in addition to making efforts to advance the status of women and promote their equality with men in all areas of education and employment in a way that accorded with Arab custom and Islamic beliefs.

28. The United Arab Emirates had also been involved in bilateral and regional cooperation activities in the area of human development and cultural diversity. It had contributed to the building of schools, hospitals, orphanages and places of worship, extended soft loans to many developing countries and hosted numerous conferences, symposia and training courses on social, environmental, population and other development issues.

29. He hoped that the Committee's discussions at the current session would help to promote the role of the United Nations in designing and coordinating development policies and programmes in developing countries and to revitalize an approach to international development and social cooperation that was based on equality among peoples and the right of States to choose their own development course and achieve a better future for their societies in accordance with their independent national policies and interests.

30. **Mr. Kim Chang Guk** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), noting that social development was a priority concern of the United Nations system, said that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had made considerable efforts to promote such development at the regional level. Despite such endeavours, however, the world social situation had worsened and new challenges had arisen.

31. Globalization had exacerbated the inequities of the international economic order, plunging the vulnerable economies of developing countries into catastrophe. Conflicts and unilateral sanctions also impeded the sustained development of those countries and often encroached on their national sovereignty.

32. Sustainable economic development was a prerequisite for social development. Accordingly, in order to achieve the objectives spelled out by the World Summit for Social Development, priority should be

given to addressing the challenges to economic development. First of all, an equitable international economic order should be established which did not blindly impose globalization on developing countries but instead included an equitable trading system, reform of the international financial institutions and a solution to the external debt problem. Secondly, unilateral economic sanctions should be ended and solutions sought to conflicts. Lastly, the role of the United Nations system in finding solutions to social development problems should be enhanced.

33. In his country, the socialist system and the Government's people-centred policies had enabled the issue of social development to be addressed successfully. Political and economic isolation and a series of natural disasters had forced the country into temporary economic difficulties in the 1990s, but the Government was modernizing the economy and carrying out large-scale infrastructure projects to help promote economic self-sufficiency and solve the food problem. His Government would contribute to the international community's social development efforts while safeguarding its national sovereignty and working towards national prosperity.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.